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ABSTRACT

This book contains 29 essays which grew out of presentations delivered at a conference on the right to literacy whose participants were invited to consider differing definitions and historical understandings of literacy and the political, pedagogical, and theoretical implications of the many approaches to literacy education that have been taken both in the United States and abroad. The book's first part, "Contexts," explores the national, local, and professional contexts of literacy; it raises critical questions both about the large social and political perspectives that inform the understanding of literacy that is generally accepted in America and about the social and political conditions that restrain or enable the realization of literacy. Part 2, "Speaking out of the Silences," explores how literacy is denied not only by overt censorship but also by the subtler and more insidious forces of racism, sexism, homophobia, and elitism; these essays offer ways of helping others to envision and attain the power to speak out. Part 3, "Literacy and Its Enemies, Illiteracy and Its Friends," offers critical perspectives on those conceptions of literacy and methods of literacy education that ultimately subvert its attainment as a right of citizens. Part 4, "Creating and Sustaining Literacy," offers curricular and pedagogical models for successful literacy efforts at different educational levels and in diverse cultural situations. The volume concludes with a synthesis of themes and an articulation of concerns that require continued critical scrutiny. (SR)

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